

# Red Moon

## Menstruation, Culture & the Politics of Gender

[TRANSCRIPT]

**Diana:** When you hear the word menstruation, what comes to mind?

**Black man in suit:** When I hear the word?

**Diana:** Menstruation.

**Black man in suit:** Menstruation?

**Diana:** Menstruation. What comes to your mind? The first associations.

**Black man in suit:** Uhm... Oh gosh, I can't... I can't think at the moment. Sorry!

**White man in suit:** What?

**Diana:** Menstruation.

**White man in suit:** (Laughs)

**Man with glasses:** Is that... Are we talking about the same... the same thing?  
Menstruation, you said?

**Slovak man with mustache:** It's a terrible disease. When it comes over a woman, it's a dangerous thing.

**Man in cap on street:** Menstruation! Very military, very unpleasant.

**Long haired man:** Bloody thing. (Laughs)

### ARCHIVAL FILM

- **Male teacher:** The ovum travels through the fallopian tube toward the uterus. At the same time, the lining of the uterus becomes engorged with blood and nutritive fluids in preparation for the development of a fertilized egg into a baby. If the female cell is not fertilized, it dissolves or disintegrates in the tube.

- **Female teacher:** Since the lining is no longer needed, it too dissolves away. And it flows out of the body through an opening in the hymen, which is a membrane over the opening of the vagina. And so we say that we are menstruating.

- **Male teacher:** And this is called menstruation.

- **Female teacher:** Just the natural, normal process leading up to being a mother.

- **Molly:** Peggy, of course I can't go swimming! You know I've got The Curse!

**NARRATOR:** My name's Diana. From the beginning, menstruation's given me nothing but trouble. Five days a month, it takes over my life and I see red. Cramps, migraines and depression – sounds more like symptoms of a disease than of a natural process. If I'm healthy, what makes menstruation so painful? My visits to the gynecologist didn't provide any answers. The medieval torture chair, the cold metal instruments poking

around inside, always yielded the same diagnosis: “Everything’s fine. Take a pill“. But I didn’t want to take pills anymore and so I stopped. And now my period and its army of symptoms wages war – and the battlefield is my body. Being a woman felt like punishment for a crime I didn’t commit.

For generations, the women in my family suffered from PMS and painful periods, which, like a family heirloom, was passed on to me. Growing up, I learned the topic was off-limits. I got the message loud and clear that “when you are menstruating, no man should know.”

At any given time, 25% of the female population is menstruating. Invisible. Discreet. Why is this normal biological function taboo? There must be some deeper meaning. To find out if attitudes towards menstruation had changed since the fall of the Iron Curtain, I went back to my elementary school.

### **GIRLS IN CLASSROOM**

- **Girl 1**: My drawing is about the struggle between good and evil. On the good side, I can have kids, I can have a family. On the evil side, I will be nervous and it will hurt. And I’ll cry every day and maybe even every night. I don’t know, good and evil. They’re even. It’s half and half.

- **Diana**: So girls, would you change to be boys?

- **Girls**: Yes!

- **Diana**: Why?

- **Dominika**: Boys have it easier because they can’t get periods. But they have the disadvantage that they can’t wear high heels, like we do. On the other hand, when they go to the toilet, they have it much easier.

- **Diana**: Because they can pee wherever they want?

- **Dominika**: Yes. But when we squat, everything is in full view.

**NARRATOR**: In Dominika, I could see myself at her age. I didn’t want menstruation to be a burden for her too, so I made her a promise. I loaned her a camera so that she could record a pre-menstrual video diary. In return, I promised to shed some light on menstrual misconceptions before her first period.

**DOMINKA FILM DIARY**: I’m eleven, and I haven’t gotten my period yet. I’m a little scared of getting it too. But for example, a little adventure happened to me. Well, not really an adventure but – I played a joke on a friend. I had a classmate over at my house, and we called her on the landline. We played a prank on her. So we called and told her I’d gotten “that menstruation thing.” I pretended I was like in a total panic, that I didn’t know what was happening to me. Well, I did know, but I said I didn’t know what to do. So she started to ask me if I had cramps and stuff like that. I said, “Yes, yes!” and then I hung up the phone. Then I called back and told her it was a joke. We all had a good laugh.

**NARRATOR:** In my native Slovakia, there was a custom at winter's end whereby menstruating girls were pulled across fields to fertilize the soil for spring. Unfortunately, most menstruation myths aren't as quaint. To draw attention away from the fact that 80% of women suffer either physically or psychologically during menstruation, 150 different symptoms are attributed to PMS. In other words, at this very moment, millions of women on earth are unhappy and yet the silence is deafening. So I took it upon myself to find some answers. Having grown up in Eastern Europe, I looked to the West as the land of opportunity and the seat of knowledge. Once there, I headed to its most prestigious centers of learning.

**PETER ELLISON:** Menstruation, yes. All our reproductive biology is very intimately connected to our emotional life and our emotional experience – even via pathways that are operating within our bodies. Certainly there are other pathways that are operating outside of our body, in terms of social practices and cultural practices having to do with reproductive biology that then affect how we feel and think and behave. Other people are experts in that domain. I'm alas not. But the area that I do know something about, which is what's going on inside the body, to me, is just as compelling in the connections that it speaks to between reproductive events and the inner life of human beings.

**NARRATOR:** I wondered at first if the academic approach wasn't over my head.

**KAREN HOUPERT:** I think the culture of concealment that surrounds menstruation does influence the way that we feel about our bodies because, in a certain way, we get a message very early on that we are not supposed to talk about periods. And historically there's been, until very recently, no movies that mention menstruation, no books that mention menstruation. No one talks about it in public. So young girls get a message that this doesn't happen. There's no mention that this happens in our kind of public conversations. So it's very disorienting, I think, for a young girl to feel like something like this is happening to her, and happening to her body, but no one talks about it. And so I think it does begin to influence the way you feel. You try to make sense of that. Why does no one talk about menstruation? It's something shameful.

**NARRATOR:** I was the last girl in my class to get my period. It came without warning. Standing at the blackboard, something wet oozed between my thighs. I felt naked in front of everyone. It was like a nightmare, except that I was wide awake. For centuries, religion dictated what women could and couldn't do during their 'unclean' days. But as religion's influence diminished, new ways were found to exclude women and keep them in their place.

**BARBARA DUDEN:** I think medicine is the institution who gives body, or physics, to the social order. And you can see how medicine in the 19<sup>th</sup> century first talks about the uterus, and then talks about the ovaries, and menstruation, as a sign that women can not go to university because their monthly blood obscures their capacity to think and so on.

**KAREN HOUPERT:** Throughout American history, you can document certain cases where social scientists are enlisted to prove that women are less efficient in the work place when they're having their period. Those studies tend to crop up at certain points in history when there's a lot of anxiety about women's increasing role in public life. For example, when women were first pushing to have access to higher education, to go to college in this country, there was a rash of studies showing that their periods made them unfit for scholars and were an indication that they would not be able to handle the rigors of intellectual life because of their periods. And then a little bit later, when the US went to war, during WWII, and the government really wanted women to be in the work force, there began to be studies showing that women were very capable workers regardless of whether they were having their periods. Then, after the war, when the government wanted women to go back into the home and raise their children and give those jobs in the factories back to men, there's a whole new slew of studies showing that menstruation renders you unfit for efficient work, and that a woman's place is in the home raising children. When you look at it that way, there are definitely political reasons for periods to be analyzed and questioned and put in front of the public in this way.

**MARTHA MACCLINTOCK:** One of my favorite early studies was done by Alice Dan. And what she did was she measured mood every single day in men and women. And what she showed was that over a month, or over two months, that men's moods were just as variable as women's moods. But women could at least predict when their moods were going to be less than optimal.

**NARRATOR:** Religion, science, politics, international corporations – it seems everyone has a stake in making women feel dissatisfied with themselves. Is there any way to rise above the fray?

In some cultures, I discovered that women and their bodies were regarded very differently. From childhood, girls were taught to work their bodies and become masters of their uteruses. Exercising the uterus decreased the pain of childbirth, and in some cases, even made it orgasmic. If childbirth without pain was possible, then menstruation should be a piece of cake. So why did these practices disappear? I found a woman who not only seemed to know the secret but was sharing it.

**MONIKA LANZADERA:** I can visualize my uterus in motion. And I can get the same results as exercising a biceps. That's my personal belief. If you lack of control of these zones, it might be hard at first. Stretch from here, upwards and downwards. I can feel my insides working. You can feel your uterus being caressed. You can feel it in motion. Afterwards, you feel the positive effects.

**NARRATOR:** Curious to see if it would work for others, I set up an experiment. I organized a group of women, all of whom experienced menstrual problems, to participate in a belly dance therapy class.

**AD FOR CLASS:** Do you suffer from menstrual pain? Documentary invites you to an oriental dance therapy class. Interested? Call us!

**CHUS:** The problem is, the pain gets so bad I can't go to work. Sometimes, I get so dizzy and weak that I faint. I even passed out in the metro. I hate it. It interrupts my life. Not just during my period. 5 days before, the party starts!

**RAQUEL:** I was so scared. I thought I was dying from the pain. I told my boyfriend to call a doctor. I was in bad shape. I didn't know what was wrong/happening to me. I vomited. I went to the gynecologist. He told me everything was normal, everything was fine. But I find it strange that... as I get older, it gets increasingly painful.

**BLANCA:** I got my period when I was 11. I was a total wreck, in bed vomiting and in pain. This went on for a few years... until it coincided with a family trip. My father who's a doctor said: 'Take this pill with a glass of cognac.' All of the sudden...the pain was gone and life was beautiful! From then on, I wanted my period to come... to feel that wonderful again. I developed a serious drinking problem that I got out of thanks to Tai-chi. But there are days I need a swig of gin with my pill... and I go to class almost high. It's been pretty tough. For years I've been wishing to hit menopause!

**MONIKA LANZADERA:** I'm going to teach you a method... that goes beyond painkillers. It's a solution that resides inside each of you. Through dance, we begin to discover what our body is telling us.

**CHRIS KNIGHT:** If some things are sacred, if there are to be rules in life, it seems... it's always seemed to me that... the place to start is with the body. That if the body isn't sacred, then you can forget other kinds of rules. / You know, there's not going to be any culture. / So the very potency of women's blood which used to connect her with the sacred, is now the source of her disconnection and her disempowerment. / And, you know, keeping women from understanding the power of menstruation, and the potential for togetherness that being female could confer... that is the greatest... the most central, deepest, most ancient thing is to stop women from knowing about their own power. But it's linked up, it's linked up with everything else, which keeps us from understanding our potential as human beings.

**NARRATOR:** Hearing those words lifted my spirits – and opened a window on a new way of looking at things. I wonder if men envy our menstrual power!

**Diana:** Do you think that men can menstruate? Some men can menstruate?

**Man in red shirt:** Do I think men can? I doubt it.

**Diana:** Would you like to try it?

**Man in red shirt:** No.

**Diana:** Why?

**Man in red shirt:** Thank you.

**Young man in red sweatshirt:** Definitely not, no.

**Diana:** Why not?

**Young man in red sweatshirt:** I'm quite happy being a man.

**Diana:** Would you like to try it? To menstruate?

**Man in green tee-shirt:** Yeah. I would know how the women feel. Now I don't know how they feel so I can't say if it's good or not. I think it's not that cool, but...

**Diana:** Yeah? Why?

**Young man in red sweatshirt:** I don't know, it's like blood coming out.

**NARRATOR:** Watching TV as a child, I believed menstruation blood to be blue. Alas, years later what I discovered in my panties wasn't the mysterious sterile blue liquid, but disappointing red blood. Terrified of stains, women double up on protection. Our fear fuels the feminine hygiene industry that grows by billions every year. In her lifetime, one woman uses 10,000 pads and tampons. Every day, 3 million are flushed into our rivers and oceans. 20% of world pesticide production is used on the cotton in the manufacturing process.

**Diana:** And so if it's not good to have something in the vagina during menstruation....

**Renu:** Yes...

**Diana:** What about tampons?

**Renu:** They are very unhealthy to use. It is the cotton that absorbs not only the blood but it absorbs all the liquid in the vagina. And therefore it changes the climate and makes it more susceptible to any kind of infection or maybe even Candida. And also the flow is being inhibited. It is much better to let it flow out, or use this... which been around for the last 30 years, it's like a rubber container called the Keeper or the Moon Cup, which is a receptacle that collects the blood. It doesn't absorb it, but just collects it. And it should be wet, and then you insert it in the vagina, it opens, and then it sits in front of your cervix and the blood just trickles in. And then depending on your flow, how heavy it is, you have to empty it every time you go to the bathroom to take a leak.

**Spaniard with horse:** It's not something to talk about. It's a disgusting thing.

**Diana:** Why disgusting?

**Spaniard with horse:** Well isn't it?

**Diana:** You think it's disgusting?

**Spaniard with horse:** Yeah, it's nasty.

**Diana:** Why?

**Spaniard with horse:** Because it spreads filth around.

**NARRATOR:** Menstruation, despite being a symbol of womanhood, is perceived as 'dirty'. So what does this say about being a woman? Feminists themselves examined

the issue from all sides. For some, menstruation isn't just a natural process, but a political choice.

**BARBARA DUDEN:** In the 1970's, with the women's movement, the female body was the main target. We wanted to say: "de-biologize" the female body. They said: the female body is her destiny. Woman's destiny is biology and so on... What does the pill tell to my generation and to further generations? It tells: you better program your body because it doesn't fit into the demands of functioning rationality. Because there is something in this movement in which you can't always fit.

**CHRIS KNIGHT:** If this is a world made for men, with these clocks, but you are somebody with, you know, a menstrual cycle, that really is a problem. There really is a clash. And the problem is that you are biologically female. And so the medical establishment and the people who make Tampax, they say okay, there's a problem: you've got a clock in your body, well how do we solve it? Well we can give you a pill. Maybe you can be as good as a man if you take a pill, then you don't have all these ups and downs.

**BARBARA DUDEN:** And the history of the pill and the programming. Just linear time, we are always the same. And if Pinkus would decide, we reprogram it so we never bleed. They can make it, always straight.

**DOMINIKA FILM DIARY:** Hi, it's me again. In a magazine, I read about this lady whose period was 12 days late...so she thought she had a baby in her belly. Because, you understand, sometimes that's what happens when you're late: you might be pregnant. So that lady took a bunch of pregnancy tests and finally it turned out that they were all positive...or negative? I don't know but in any case, there was no baby. She went to Mr. Doctor and he said the tests were correct and it shouldn't be like that but that her period was somehow late. Mr. Doctor didn't know why but that sometimes it could happen to other girls and women around the world. (Sigh)

**Asian mother:** She's not having her period yet. (Laughs)

**Diana:** Would you like to have it?

**Asian daughter:** No!

**Diana:** Why?

**Asian daughter:** Because uhm... it's a hassle.

**French girl:** Would I stop if I could? Well, sure! If I could still have babies.

**Diana:** And if you could, would you stop menstruating? If that could be possible?

**Woman 1:** That would be very good.

**Diana:** Yeah?

**Woman 1:** Yes, definitely.

**NARRATOR:** Well, it's possible. Millions of women around the world choose to stop menstruating. I had to meet the man who made "their dream" come true – the inventor of the contraceptive implant – a medical specialist who, in the name of science, is ridding the world of so-called, "unnecessary bleeding."

**FEMALE PATIENT:** I haven't menstruated for 9 years. I feel very good. I never get headaches, or feel any pain. It's great. I decided to never menstruate again.

**DR. ELSMAR COUTINHO:** I wrote this paper for a British journal with this title: "Is Menstruation Natural?" Or is menstruation normal? And I say no. If you look into the dictionary what the word "natural" means, or "normal", you're going to see that menstruation is nothing of the kind. Because if it's normal, it's good to begin with. It's uh...harmless. Menstruation is not harmless. Menstruation causes at least twenty different diseases. / First of all, menstruation is incompatible with life in nature. Because an animal cannot survive bleeding longer than a few minutes in the forest. Blood (sniff sniff) the smell of blood attracts the predators. / This one is bleeding, she's going to die. / You see? So blood, the scent of blood is the scent of death.

When I talk to priests about menstruation, I describe why a woman bleeds, they get very upset. Why is that so? And one of them told me so at the end of it, he said: "Doctor, menstruation is a thing of the devil. God has nothing to do with this, don't you agree?" I said yeah, I agree. (laughter) The devil invented it! (laughter again)

If you get pregnant and two days later your pregnancy does not go on, does not progress, you have a little abortion, similar to a menstruation. You'll bleed about five days. So it's like the abortion of the egg that was not fertilized.

I mean, what's the use of an ovulation that's not going to result in a pregnancy? No use! No use! You don't need to. You don't need it to attract men.

**NARRATOR:** I wasn't convinced, but the seed of doubt was planted. Could menstruation be noxious? Would I be better off taking artificial hormones? I needed a second opinion.

**Voice of Beverly Strassman:** I found it hard to believe nature had inflicted us with something so useless, even dangerous. But the seed of doubt had been planted. Could menstruation really be harmful to women's health? Would I be better off taking artificial hormones? I needed to find out more.

**BEVERLY STRASSMAN:** Most of my early discussions with pharmaceutical companies were somewhat unproductive. I mean I did a lot of this research in the 80's and I spent many years trying to contact pharmaceutical companies and to advise them that they should be thinking about how much exposure to hormones are women getting from their products compared with what women are getting from their own bodies.

I think there are many women who will want to be educated on this, and to realize the monthly period is not required. But also there's more homework for the pharmaceutical companies to do to really level with women and tell them what is the exposure that they're getting from the patch or the pills that they're offering, compared with what a woman is getting from her own body. So that she can weigh the risks and the benefits. Cause there are some benefits to these hormones, as I mentioned with estrogen, a lower risk for osteoporosis, and then there are also costs. Increased risk for breast cancer, and if the levels go up really high, increased risk for stroke.

**NARRATOR:** I wonder how many women on the pill know that when they get their period, it's fake. This artificially-induced bleeding doesn't make any sense.

**Black guys singing on street:**

I came home one day, one day, one day  
 And this is what she said, she said  
 She said baby can you go to the store  
 Cause I'm telling you the blood is gonna pour  
 I said hold on, wait a minute, are you trying to tell me it's that time of the month?  
 She said: yes I am, and I'm gonna be really blunt  
 So I'll tell you what you do: here's the keys to my right  
 Go to one of them good old stores, and buy me some tampons tonight (laughs)  
 Cause it's her period time  
 It's time for her to clean herself  
 Yes it's her period time  
 Don't get it wrong  
 It's time for a new life.

**DOMINIKA FILM DIARY:** Today, I was on the toilet doing a "number two". At first, it wouldn't come out. But finally it did. When I wiped myself, I saw blood on the paper... I got scared.. I didn't say anything to anyone, but I was freaked out. When I wiped again, there was some more. I freaked out and ran to the washroom. Then I realized it wasn't "that menstruation thing". Because I thought it was my period. But fortunately, it wasn't! I was sort of like glad but at the same time I wasn't. When I rinsed from underneath in the shower (when I showered from underneath), I realized it wasn't true. Phew! What relief!

**NARRATOR:** I can't help thinking about how Dr. Coutinho looks after for young girls.

**DR. ELSMAR COUTINHO:** If a girl is going to menstruate starting at when they are 10 years old, don't let her. Prevent ovulation from occurring by giving the pill continuously or giving one of these other means that I use. I use a lot of implants as contraceptives. Long acting implants. Once they grow, they don't think of sex. Once they grow to the size they want to grow, then we let them have their first ovulation. If you prevent that

ovulation to become a conception, they're going to have a menstruation. One. After that one they don't need to menstruate anymore. I would let the woman menstruate one time in her life to know what is menstruation like and after that...

**JANE BENNETT:** The other thing I'm concerned of...with...concerned about with young girls taking the pill, is before they really know themselves, before they really know who they are, they're having a very strong chemical acting in their body that will also act on their mind, as they're developing through adolescence and through their teens and early adult years before they really know who they are. So if they're having mood changes, mood disorders or depression or low level depression as a result of the pill, if it's interfering with their libido, which is a very common symptom, they won't know, because they won't have the comparison of being an adult having had that.

**DOMINIKA FILM DIARY:** I can't stop crying because...I don't know...I just can't. I cry all the time...and everything... I'm so sensitive...it's horrible. All it takes is for someone to look at me the wrong way, or raise their voice at me...That's how bad it is. That's all I wanted to tell you. Oh God, Oh God...

**ALEXANDRA POPE:** You know, it's hard to feel positive about your menstrual cycle when you're suffering. And art of the suffering is because we don't know how to value the cycle. And in my experience of teaching women over many years, when women just start to value the rhythm of the cycle and to recognize that at different times of the cycle there are different moods and feelings, and different levels of energy, to flow with those energies. For one thing, something really beautiful starts to open up. For example, a lot of that premenstrual kind of irritability and stuff, is often because a woman is just feeling like she just wants to pull back and do less, and be there less for others. Because menstruation pulls you into yourself, and helps you to take care of yourself. So it's really a woman negotiating coming back deeply into herself again. But she doesn't acknowledge that, the world doesn't acknowledge that, so she's trying to do two things at once. She's trying to be deeply with herself and having to just, you know, tend to other people. And that creates irritability. But the moment a woman starts to go: "Yeah, I need time for myself now. This is important, this is healthy." Then they can be much more assertive and say: "No, not now. I need to attend to my own kind of business, whatever that is." And uhm...So that naturally reduces their symptoms. But also, when a woman is comfortable with the rhythms, stress just drops. And stress is the culprit in the back of all health issues. And particularly menstrual health issues. The menstrual cycle is the stress-sensitive system in women.

**PENELOPE SHUTTLE:** The moment of truth is the moment of menstruation. And I think it's because, despite people having physical pain, distress, it's just probably the most powerful moment in our lives. And it is very analogous in many ways to birth. I mean that's why some of the pains are like birth pains. But the thing that's being given birth to is a new you. You're giving birth to yourself. I mean we've got every month, a menstruating woman has the choice to conceive and have a child, and devote 20 years

of your life, or you have the chance to give birth to yourself. But birth can be very difficult and painful. And this giving birth to yourself, and making a new life for yourself is offered to us every month. And it can be an enormous gift. But sometimes being given huge possibility is also scary.

**VICKY AGUDO:** Nothing happens right before our period that doesn't happen other days. If I've been dragging a problem around for a month, it's possible I'll be more sensitive right before my period. It's like: "I've had it!" I put up with it yesterday, but not today. My complaints are justified though. It's not because I'm about to get my period that they're not legitimate. It's not just the hormones talking, no. I'm speaking up because I kept quiet for 5 days. Today is the 6<sup>th</sup> and the hormones are helping me say what I was incapable of saying 5 days ago. Periods become an excuse to treat us as if we're being unreasonable, to belittle us. Understand? And women shouldn't allow that to happen.

**Diana:** What means menstruation for you?

**Dread locks guy:** Menstruation? As in period? Uhm...Bad moods, mood swings, feeling sick. I don't know. Irritable

**ALEXANDRA POPE:** We are more vulnerable at that time. It's like the veil between our conscious and our unconscious is thinner. And so the things that we normally repress come through at that time. And you know women say: Oh, I'm not myself right now, I'm pre-menstrual, I go: nuh-uh- uh. Actually, you're more yourself than you have ever been. This is some of your deeper truths coming through now. So listen, pay attention. And often women in relationship get, you know, women say: Oh, I always want to divorce my partner before I bleed. And actually, they didn't really need to divorce their partner, they do need to do some relationship work. And it's the woman that becomes the channel for what isn't expressed in the relationship. So I really encourage women not to dismiss what's coming out from them. There's real intelligence there. It's her emotional intelligence system at work, And that she should pay attention, and deal with the issues that are coming out. And if it's too hard to get support, you know to get a counselor, that's what I, you know, as a counselor, as a psychotherapist, I'm often working with that with women. I want them to feel a dignity around what's coming through at that time.

**PENELOPE SHUTTLE:** For me, at first it meant pain, and annoyance, and then as I explored it, it became a very dynamic, important, visionary, sexualizing, liberating and spiritual part of my life, and I felt I was a whole person, because it was central in my life.

**VICKY AGUDO:** Sexual arousal causes an increase in blood flow. Women notice that the lips of the vulva swell, along with the clitoris. It's less obvious than in a man, but it happens nonetheless. There's a concentration of blood in the pelvic region. When a woman has an orgasm, the blood disperses with a wave of heat, and the pelvis becomes less congested. I can't recommend that to all women because some are

shocked by it. They can reject your advice if you speak frankly. But if a woman is receptive, and has an active sex life, I recommend that. Before taking ibuprofen, masturbate. If masturbation doesn't relieve the pain, then take ibuprofen. This is a healthy option that will not only improve your spirits, but also relieve period pain. And it's real. It can be tried and tested.

**NARRATOR:** I discovered some tempting ways to become attuned to my body. For once, doing homework was fun!

**RENU LI:** So it's really an old Taoist practice that has been passed on. And it's been used for millennia for women to educate them. For one thing, for their health, but also to be able to have more pleasure in the art of the chamber, as it was called. When there's movement in the vagina, there's reflex zones inside the vagina. And if they're being stimulated, your whole organism is being stimulated. So it makes you healthy. Making less menstrual cramps. There will be more blood flow, there will be more energy flowing in this area, and you will have less problems. The breasts need movement. They're receptacles of life force, of energy. So when you massage it, you can spread that energy and kind of give it back to yourself. And because of the stimulation of the nipples, right away there is an endocrine stimulation through the clitoris and the main, the master glands in your head, there is an influence on your hormone level. And it will alter your menstrual cycle. If you bleed extremely long and lose a lot of energy, regular breast massage will shorten your cycle.

**BELLY DANCERS:** It has helped me connect with my inner child. The girl inside me.. The one who used to dance all day (non-stop). I had forgotten that. I've also reconnected with laughter. I used to laugh less, I think. Now I laugh more. I'm more conscious of my (4 year-old) daughter's femininity, of the gestures I have to re-learn when I look in the mirror. I don't want her to lose that. I don't want her to have to deal with the same issues when she grows up. What I've mostly gotten out of this experience, which for me is most important, is group unity. There was a strong, heartfelt bond. That's been lost among women. I work in an office with plenty of women, but we're all isolated. I'm going to give you an update about the past few months. Some have hurt a little more, a little less. But on the whole, it doesn't hurt. I'm going to keep dancing.

**DOMINIKA FILM DIARY:** Hello again. It's that special moment when I can officially announce to you that I got my period. I found out yesterday evening...when I discovered something strange in my panties. Something brown, as if I had shit on myself. It was horrific. So last night, I slept with my knickers on. And in the morning, when I woke up, there was blood on them. And now, my mom knows too. I feel okay, nothing special/pretty normal. The day before yesterday, I had cramps when I went to bed. But I ended up sleeping fine.

**BARBARA DUDEN:** We're not always same, we are like moon. Full and emptying out. And that, there is something on movement, and time, and flow of time, and interior flow that is very precious, I think.

**NARRATOR:** Although I still have questions, I know that the answers lie within myself. As I try and connect to the moon inside me, being a woman has taken on a whole new meaning. I no longer fight my hormonal clock, because it's she that reminds me once a month that I have a personal, intimate connection to nature and the universe.

[END]